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771 pers is evident at the festival of The Dragon King of the Lake, in no way a goddess, and at that of Tung Yueh the Taoist King of the Underworld.

It is certain that there is, especially among the educated class, a feeling that worship of the gods should be left to women, but this idea is not sufficiently precise to give rise to rigid rules or taboos. On the other hand the rites of Ancestor Worship need a man to be performed, and cannot be left to the inclination or piety of women. Only a male descendant can make the sacrifices to the ancestral spirits, and failing sons a man must adopt a nephew or a distant relative to perform these rites. The elaborate rituals which are described in ancient Chinese literature, and which are or were, perhaps practised in modern times by great families in other parts of China, form no part of Min Chia practice. Ancestor Worship can be divided into a simple daily rite, and a few more ceremonial occasions recurring on fixed dates in the year.

• 769 353 Every family has an ancestral altar, usually a long table, which may be set up in the principal reception room on the ground floor of the house, or, often, in the long bare upper room, which by poor families is also used as a store room. On the table stand three ancestral tablets, representing the heads of the family in the previous three generations, and these are flanked by vases of flowers, and a few ornaments, with an incense burner in front. Sometimes, rather incongrously, a statue of Kuan Yin also finds a place on this altar. On the wall behind the altar red paper strips bearing the characters for Heaven and Earth are pasted, these rather vague powers, once worshipped by the Emperors, being thus associated with the ancestral spirits. Before the morning and evening meals one of the male members of the household, usually the son of the house, comes to the altar, strikes a gong, and lights a stick of incense in the burner before the

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tablets, and bows, He then fetches the bowls containing the morning meal, and places them on the altar, again strikes the gong, and waits with downcast eyes for about a minute. Then, bowing once more to the altar, he takes the dishes away and the meal is eaten.

This simple rite suffices to associate the spirits of the dead with the daily life of their descendants and ensure their well-being. On certain occasions in the year more elaborate ceremonies are performed. The first fourteen days of the 7th Lunar month, a period corresponding to the early part of August in the Solar Calendar, is traditionally the time when the spirits of the ancestors return to dwell in the family home and observe the conduct and condition of their descendants. On the night of the 15th of the 7th Month, when the spirits are due to depart, the ceremony called Shu Pao, "Burning the Bundles" is performed. At dusk an altar, usually a square table used at other times for meals, is set up in the courtyard in front of the main hall, where the altar of the ancestral spirits stands. It is covered with a piece of red embroidery and spread with a number of dishes of sweetmeats, cooked food, fruit, and six cups of rice wine. An incense burner flanked by two candles stands in the centre of the altar, and in front of it, on the courtyard floor, a brazier with a wood fire is kindled. This is flanked by clusters of incense sticks stuck into the crevices of the pavement.

The head of the family, or the senior male present, kneels to the right of the altar on a cushion, facing outwards, and one of the women hands him a pile of cardboard boxes covered with coloured paper, made to resemble Chinese books. On each of these is inscribed the name, date of birth and death, and age at decease of one ancestor of the family, and every ancestor has such a "book", while those of most importance have several, each with an identical inscription. Taking a pile of these "books" the head of the family reads

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796 out the inscriptions one by one in a chanting voice, handing them as he finishes to one of the children, who then lays them on the wood fire, while another member of the family, a wife or daughter, throws on to the fire strings of "spirit money"—coloured paper representing ingots of gold and silver.

Fresh piles of "books", which have been lying on the ancestral altar, are brought out and the process of reading out the inscriptions and burning the "books" continues until every deceased ancestor has been so honoured. As, in a wealthy family, the records so kept may go back several generations, and the number of individuals so remembered be over a hundred, the ceremony lasts a long time. When all have been read out and burned, the head of the family rises, and bows three times to the altar, while all the other members of the family, men and women in order of age pass behind the altar, and *k'e t'ou* three times—that is prostrate themselves and knock the forehead on the floor. Even the youngest baby is brought by its mother to make this sign of reverence. The head of the family then pours the cups of rice wine on to the ground before the altar, scattering a few drops from each cup into the fire, and takes pinches of food from the dishes and drops them into the fire. All proceed to the street gate where incense sticks are lighted and fire crackers are discharged, to speed the spirits on their way. This ends the rite. The fire is doused, the altar cleared away. The spirits have departed for another year.

The behaviour of all who take part in this rite is in marked contrast to the careless conduct observed at temples. There is here no laughing and conversation. Nothing but the voice of the head of the family chanting out the names and ages of the deceased breaks the silence, and the scene, lit only by the candles and the firelight, is impressive and solemn.

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(1) ANCESTOR WORSHIP

It is characteristic of the Min Chia attitude to religious practices that, although the Shu Pao ceremony is a rite of Ancestor Worship, it has become associated with other deities as well. On the day following the ceremony many people, particularly women, go to the temple of Tung Yueh, the Taoist King of the Underworld, and there offer prayers and burn incense for the repose of the spirits of the dead, with the same ritual as is used in the spring festival of this deity. The difficulty of reconciling the belief that the ancestral spirits have just been dwelling in the home, and the belief that they, or some of them, have been confined in the Taoist underworld until released by these sacrifices, does not appear to trouble the Min Chia mind. This is by no means the only instance in which conflicting theology is ignored in favour of the performance of differing rites serving the same general purpose.

Also connected with the Shu Pao ceremony is the custom of releasing K'un Ming "lamps", in reality fire balloons ingeniously made of paper and bamboo lathes, which rise burning to great heights on still windless evenings, such as are common at this season of the year. These fire balloons take their name from the famous Chinese general of the third century A.D., Ch'u-k'o Liang, or Ch'u-k'o K'un-Ming, who first temporarily conquered Yunnan for the Western Han Dynasty. Legend relates that he used this device to send signals to detached bodies of his troops in his wars with the native princes of Yunnan. Although this is the explanation commonly given for the name of the fire balloons, it is admitted that they are never used till the night of the 14th of the 7th Month, the night of the Shu Pao ceremony, and subsequent nights for about a month. In spite of this rather faint connection with religion, no one is able to explain what function, other than that of entertainment, the release of these fire balloons is meant to fulfil. Releasing

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K'un Ming lamps is part of the general celebration of the time, an appropriate custom, like decorating a house with holly at Christmas in England, which has no avowed connection with the purely religious ceremonies of the festival.

One of the principal festivals connected with Ancestor Worship among the Chinese, is Ch'ing Ming, "Pure Brightness" a day corresponding with April 5th, or a date not far removed, according to the variations of the Lunar Calendar. This is the occasion when tombs are swept and repaired and good luck charms pasted on them, while the family holds a kind of ceremonial picnic party at the tombs in which the spirits of the ancestors are supposed to share. Among the Min Chia this custom is observed in a somewhat different manner. The actual date of Ch'ing Ming is in no way especially honoured, but at about the same time of year, April, when the days are warm and the rains have not yet begun, parties called *dso mu* "(going) up to the graves" are held. The graves at Ta Li and in the Ta Li district are invariably placed on the lowest slopes of the mountain, above the belt of cultivable land, and never among the actual fields[1]. Consequently to go to the graves is to go "up".

On any fine day in April, the Lunar Third Month, a family may decide to *dso mu*. Food and cooking utensils are loaded on to donkeys or carried by porters, rugs and cushions are brought, and the whole party starts out about eleven in the morning, the men walking together in front, the women trailing along behind, while the aged or infirm of either sex may ride a donkey or a pony. Guests not members of the family, nor even related to it, are invited, and the party may number as many as fifty people, children included. The graves are perhaps distant some two or three miles from the

[1] An exception is made for those drowned in the lake. They are buried on the foreshore among the willow plantations which fringe the lake, never with the rest of the family on the mountain.

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city among the pine woods which clothe the lower slopes. 769
Arrived there, rugs and cushions are spread out on the flat 527
terrace in front of the tombs, and a cooking fire is started at 788
a little distance. Sticks of incense are lighted and stuck in front of each tomb. The women busy themselves cooking a large meal, while the children play among the pine trees, and the men and their guests, lie smoking in the shade or ramble on the mountain side.

If the graves happen to be near some famous beauty spot, such as the Wind Eye Cave "Fêng Yen Tung" (ruined Buddhist rock shrines in a precipice about two thousand ft. above the plain), or the tomb of Ber Wa, the White Prince, legendary hero of the Min Chia, the men and their guests will make an excursion to see it, but the women, busy with their cooking, have no time for such recreations. When the 264
meal is prepared, and the men have returned, about four in 769
the afternoon, chopsticks and bowls are laid on the grass in 527
circles, and the guests form themselves into parties for the 788
feast. The men eat first, waited on by the boys of the family, and the women last, when all the guests have been served. The meal, though eaten informally seated on the grass, is elaborate and tasty, certain dishes regarded as appropriate for the occasion always being included, especially the *Huo Kuo* or fire pot, a circular dish with a charcoal brazier in the middle of it, in which meat and vegetables are cooked and eaten at the table itself. There is also a considerable consumption of local rice wine.

Before the dishes are served to anyone, one of the younger women, daughter-in-law or unmarried daughter, takes them to the tombs and places a dish on the stone slab before each tomb, and at the same time *k'e t'ou's* before the grave. Thus the ancestors are associated in the feast and held 769
to partake of it also. When all is finished, and the party 788
begins to leave, the women in turn *k'e t'ou* before the graves 527

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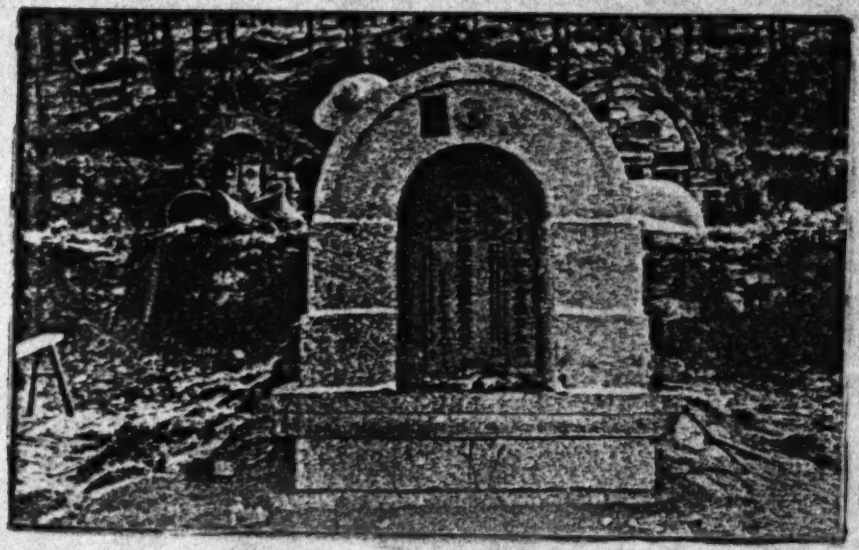
Paper horses prepared for a funeral.

Min Chia tomb with sacrificial offerings.



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and light new sticks of incense which are left burning there. Men, on the other hand, do not perform these acts of reverence on this occasion. The *dso mu* custom is thus partly a religious rite, and no doubt primarily so, but also a pichic and a welcome outing in delightful surroundings. Nor is it strictly limited to the tombs of the male ancestors of the family. On these occasions the descendants on the female side are also invited, and I have observed girls making obeisance to ancestral tombs which were not those of their own family, but of their mother's family. The custom of inviting a large number of guests in no way connected with the family (I myself was often invited in this way) differentiates the *dso mu* rite from the Shu Pao, which is private and for the family itself only. Unlike the Chinese Ch'ing Ming, it is customary to *dso mu* more than once a year, for the autumn month corresponding with the Solar October, when the rains are over, and the cold winds not yet begun, is equally favoured. Nor do families content themselves with one visit at spring and another in the autumn, for it is not uncommon to make two visits in the same season.

The atmosphere on these occasions is in no way solemn, for the Min Chia do not have the feelings of terror and dread associated with graves in western cultures. The open hillside, with the graves scattered among the pine trees and rocks, has none of the gloomy associations of a cemetery, and tombs are not treated with the half concealed aversion masquerading as reverence with which we are familiar. The children play among their forbears' graves unconcerned, the elders recline in the shade of the monuments, or rest their backs against the sloping mounds. The atmosphere is informal, happy and intimate. The feelings about graves are rather those of pride at the excellence of the workmanship or the skill of the caligraphy on the inscription than thoughts of mortality. A Min Chia will show you his father's tomb

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769 with the quiet pride with which a European might show his
527 house. A beautiful piece of work, look at the size of the granite stones, and the purity of the white marble tombstone, admire the choice and caligraphy of the inscription, and all this cost so much money!

764 Tombs, indeed play a very important part in the life of
531 the community. They are better built, and of more enduring materials, than the houses of the living, and they cost a great deal of money. The monument, made of dressed granite blocks quarried on the mountain, is of a pattern peculiar to Ta Li and its district. Usually about eight feet long and cylindrical in shape, it has a rounded top of fitted granite slabs and an arched front made of a single massive curved block. In the recess beneath this arch the white marble tombstone is fitted, closing what is apparently a tomb chamber. This is not so, however, for actually this stone structure is not the tomb itself, but a monument raised over the grave, which is only a deep trench excavated in the soil and lined with granite slabs. Thus what is visible, in spite of its suggestive shape, is only a false tomb, and is filled in with rubble stones. Carving is employed to adorn the arch and the marble slabs which support the tombstone. In early examples dating from the Ming dynasty *Chi lin* and dragons, or galloping horses, were the preferred motifs; to-day these are still popular, though less well executed, but the crossed flags of the Chinese Republic is a still more favoured design.

764 The inscriptions usually give the rank, if any, which the deceased bore in civil employment or in the army, and the age at death with the date. The name of the wife is also frequently found on the husbands' tomb as well as his own, and a pious inscription recording the elevation of the monument by the sons. A laudatory couplet offered by one distinguished man, and written by another, is added in the case of important personages. In the tomb illustrated, this couplet

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527 The morning of New Year's Day is saluted with a prolonged discharge of fire crackers at the front gate of the house and in the courtyard, but the Min Chia do not celebrate the last night of the old year by a more or less continuous fusillade of crackers as is customary in North China. As soon as the crackers are fired off the women of the household come out and light large sticks of incense, which are placed on either side of all the doors opening on to the courtyard, and before the front gate as well. Incense sticks and flowers are also placed on the altar of the ancestors in the main reception room, and the floor of this room is spread with fresh green pine needles. Doors and gateways are also decorated with green pine boughs, and new paper strips bearing the characters for good luck, wealth, happiness, etc., are pasted on to lintels and pillars.

527 Immediately the morning meal is eaten the women bring
● 769 out a square table and set it up as an altar in the courtyard,
788 just as in the Shu Pao ceremony. Covered with a rich piece of red silk embroidery it is spread with dishes of sweetmeats and cups of wine, but also on this occasion the ancestral tablets themselves are ranged in two rows facing each other along the sides of the altar, with an incense burner in the middle. Incense sticks are planted in the crevices of the courtyard before this altar, but there is no fire as in the Shu Pao ceremony. Meanwhile hired musicians, none of whom are in fact Buddhist monks, arrive with their instruments and are seated on both sides of the main reception room
[533] behind the altar table. They begin to play music and to recite sutras, male members of the family, especially the elder sons, taking a part in the playing of musical instruments from time to time. This music and recitation is kept up all day until about four in the afternoon. As soon as the musical recitation of sutras has started the members of the family, led by the eldest male present, and followed in order

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of age by all others male and female, come out and *k'e t'ou* (prostrate themselves) before the altar on which the ancestral tablets stand. Pinches of food from the dishes and drops of wine from the cups are scattered and poured on the pavement before the altar by the head of the family.

During the morning the family is visited by members of collateral branches and relatives on the female side, who on arrival also *k'e t'ou* before the altar, while visiting friends not related, bow ceremoniously to the tablets of the ancestors. The tablets, regarded as the resting place of the spirits of the deceased, are in fact treated with the same courtesy as living parents or grandparents. Members of the family who go out from time to time to visit their relatives elsewhere pay the same respects to the tablets in each house at which they call. The chanting and music which have continued all day with brief pauses, cease about four in the afternoon, when the musicians, after being given some refreshments, depart. The altar is then removed and the family sits down to the New Year Feast. These ceremonies are explained as homage to the ancestors and an offering designed to assure their goodwill and protection for the coming year, while the association of Buddhist rites with the ceremony may be regarded as intended to secure the assistance of the gods also.

The behaviour of those present during these rites is not so reverent as during the Shu Pao ceremony, partly because the chanting and music continue all day, and daily tasks must be performed at the same time, partly because the atmosphere is one of gaiety and holiday making. While the actual prostrations before the altar are made with due reverence, the family as a whole pays little attention to the chanting of sutras and the music, which is the work of the hired musicians, only assisted for a short time at the beginning by members of the family. It is said that formerly these musicians were Buddhist monks, as the chanting of sutras would

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527 suggest, but at present there are few Buddhist monks in the
769 district, certainly not enough to perform these rites in
788 every household rich enough to pay for them.

Similar rites, but without the altar and the ancestral tablets, are performed by the same musicians and assisted in the same way by members of the family, on the anniversary of the death of any important member of the family, three anniversaries following the death being commemorated in this way. This ceremony, although no Buddhist monks take part, is none the less inspired by Buddhist traditions, for it is intended to make sure that the spirit of the deceased is released from the Buddhist hell, and transported to the paradise of Amida, a doctrine which in Mahayana Buddhism has nearly displaced the belief in transmigration and reincarnation.

769 Beliefs about the status of the spirits of the dead are in
779 fact confused by the conflicting theology of Buddhism and Ancestor Worship. It is clearly inconsistent to believe at once that the departed spirits can exercise a benevolent influence on the destiny of their descendents, and to believe that these same spirits are suffering tortures in the Buddhist inferno, or have been reincarnated as members of some other family or even race. The Min Chia do not make any attempt to reconcile these contradictions, professing ignorance of the real fate of the spirits, but performing all ceremonies which can propitiate or bring comfort to the dead. In spite of a long Buddhist tradition it is apparent that more weight is given to the belief in the power of the ancestral spirits than to the theology of the Indian religion. Many men will deny outright any belief in the Buddhist Boddhisatvas, expressing themselves in a popular rendering of the traditional Confucian argument against Buddhism, "Buddha is only a dead man, why should he have any power over we who are alive to-day?" The fact that this argument, if

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valid, would equally dispose of the claims of the ancestral spirits, seems to escape the notice of those who use it. 769 779

In view of the general ignorance of Buddhist theolog and the manner in which Buddhist beliefs have becom incorporated into systems originally distinct, it is not possible to discuss Buddhism among the Min Chia on a theoretical basis. The practice can be observed, but if any attempt is made to fit it into the theory of Buddhism as expounded by scholarly writers, a false systematisation would be the only result. The Boddhisatvas are recognised as deities, with certain powers, and are served with traditional rites on festivals. These ideas may be bad Buddhism, but they are the working practice of the Min Chia, and as such the subject of the next chapter. Nor will it be profitable, in the absence of records, to discuss whether Buddhism was formerly practised in a purer form by the inhabitants of Ta Li. The Kings of Nan Chao certainly erected the magnificent pagodas which still adorn the city, but no evidence exists to show whether the peasants of that distant age understood the religion of their rulers any better than they do to-day.

682 and unusual thing, considering the shy nature of groundhogs. The
775 chief immediately feared that his brother might be among these groundhogs, and proclaimed a general law against groundhog hunting. This law was still enforced, although the sale of groundhog pelts brings in quite a bit of money. It probably means that the Fantzu shared or at least understood the fear of their chieftain. On the other hand, according to primitive ideas of justice, the assassination was in no way avenged, since this would have been exclusively a matter that concerned the family of the victim.

789 Ancestor worship is different from that of the Chinese. There are no ancestral tablets. In the Mewu-Fantzu dialect the ancestors are called xŏŭ. After the father or mother has died, he or she is venerated by daily sacrifices in front of the tent. Later this sacrifice is made only on the 1st, 8th, 15th and 29th of the month, and then it is gradually abandoned.

791 Just as Taoist and Buddhist priests take part in exorcism, the propitiation of offended spirits and the casting out of evil ones, so Tibetan sorcerers and lamas are enlisted for this purpose. The sorcerer corresponding to the Taoist (tao-shih) or exorcist (kan-kuei-hsien-sheng) of the Chinese popular religion is called no-hua by the Tibetans and "böm-bu" (local pronunciation) by the Chinese. Thus he is a priest of the Bon religion. He wears his hair /50/ long, and is adorned with a special head scarf. (1) There are no different kinds

1. Compare Hoffmann 9), page 137 (names), page 197 (relations to shamanism).

of böm-bu. Not every tent community has a böm-bu, and unfortunately there was none in the community I visited. The böm-bu is married and his profession - the art of carrying out exorcistic rites and writing incantations to ward off spirits - is handed down from father to son, but not to daughter or son-in-law. The altar in the tent of the böm-bu contains the customary small statues of gods and bowls for the sacrificial water, as well as a large Chinese brush with which he writes his incantations, and a long row of copper coins. He always has prayer books, although the laymen say that many böm-bu cannot read their prayerbooks, but only leaf through them. On the other hand, I was told that the böm-bu are able to understand the sacred writings of the lamas, but that, conversely, fewer educated lamas understand the sacred writings of the böm-bu. In spite of the high esteem in which the lamas are